5.2 Workplace Behaviour

Acting Appropriately on the Job

It is important to act in a mature and sensible way in the workplace. Getting to work on time, doing the job correctly and responding appropriately to supervisors are important skills.

Sometimes certain behaviour can be okay in one setting — such as at a barbecue — and not okay in a work setting. Usually, a higher standard of behaviour will be expected in the workplace.

Tips for Appropriate Behaviour at Work

Communicate More Formally

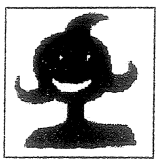
When talking, use a tone and volume that you would use when talking to someone you don't know very well — that is, a little formal. Talking loudly or rudely can disrupt others. Relax and enjoy your breaks, but always be self-controlled while at work.

Use Acceptable Language

While at work, do not swear, call people names or use insulting words or phrases. It is not appropriate to use slang when dealing with customers or members of the public. Slang expressions may be used when talking with other workers to describe a certain part, person or procedure; for example, 'sparkie' is a common term used for an electrician.

Use Humour Carefully

Avoid pranks or jokes that would disrupt the workplace or offend co-workers or customers. It might be all right to put a funny cartoon on someone's desk, but it would not be all right to pull apart someone's chair.



ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

Puzzle: Acting Appropriately

Read the clues and fill in the puzzle.

1) You need to be careful of your _____ at work. (9 letters)

2) Avoid playing _____ on co-workers. (6 letters)

3) When speaking to co-workers, you should use language that is a little _____. (6 letters)

4) You do not want to _____ your co-workers with things you say or do. (6 letters)

5) Rude or noisy behaviour can _____ other workers. (7 letters)

6) Do not use a name that someone might take as an _____. (6 letters)

7) Don't use _____ expressions when dealing with the public. (5 letters)

8) It is inappropriate to _____ (use bad language) in the workplace. (5 letters)

1. B _ _ **A** _ _ _ _ _
2. **P** _ _ _ _ _
   P
3. F _ **R** _ _ _
4. **O** _ _ _ _ _
   P
5. D _ _ **R** _ _ _
6. **I** _ _ _ _ _
7. S _ **A** _ _
   T
8. S _ **E** _ _

Sexual Behaviour in the Workplace

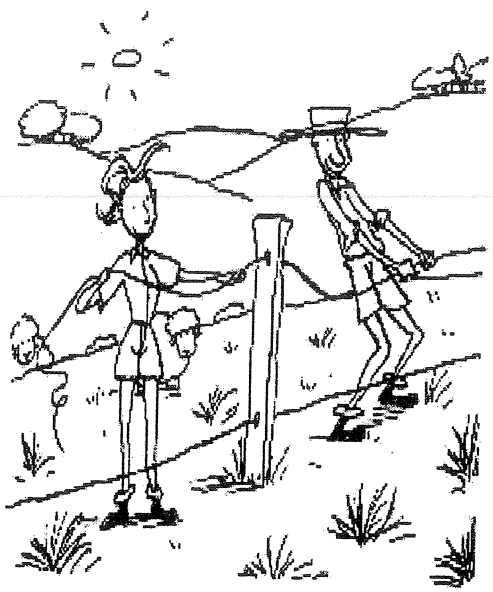
Sexual harassment is unwanted attention of a sexual nature, e.g. someone touching you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.

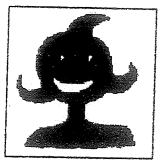
There are laws that determine what is appropriate sexual behaviour towards co-workers or customers. An employee who sexually harasses another person in the workplace may lose their job. They could also be charged with a crime, or sued.

You will have no problems if you follow these guidelines:

- Do not use language of a sexual nature. This includes talking about sexual parts of the body or sexual behaviour. Do not tell dirty jokes at work.
- Do not bring sex-related items to work, like pornographic magazines.
- When introduced, greet both men and women by saying 'Hello', and perhaps shake hands. Kissing or hugging co-workers may be considered sexual harassment.
- If you start a relationship with someone at work, save your intimate time together (like kissing or hugging) for outside work hours.

It is sometimes difficult to tell what someone may consider to be sexual harassment. It is best to stay away from anything that might be taken in this way.





ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

Is This Sexual Harassment?

Use the three questions below to solve each scenario.

1) Could this be seen as sexual harassment?

2) What is it about the situation that gives it a sexual nature?

3) How could the situation be avoided?

Scenarios

a) A male worker asks a female worker to collect some paperwork from his desk. He has a *Playboy* magazine open on his desk.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

b) A female worker places a plastic spider on a male worker's seat.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

c) A female worker is talking with a friend about the sexual experience she had on the weekend. A male worker is listening.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

d) A male worker is telling a dirty joke to his workmates. His female secretary is trying to give him some work and feels embarrassed by the joke.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Change in the Workplace

Being Independent in Your Job

New employees may need to ask questions and ask for help until they learn a job. Their supervisor will think they are showing initiative by doing these things.

Over time, an employee is expected to work more and more independently. Eventually, there comes a time when a supervisor will expect the new employee to get on with their work without needing regular instructions or advice.

Constantly asking for help on tasks that have been done for a long time may lead the supervisor to think a person is unable to do the job. They may consider finding someone else for the job.

Often, it is not that the employee can't do the job. They may simply not feel confident unless they check that they are doing the right thing. However, confidence in doing work should increase over time.

It may be useful to have a written record, or sample, of steps that are easy to forget. Let's say you need to ask your supervisor what to do with a letter for someone who has left the company. Once you have been told, you could write the steps down (perhaps on a copy of the letter), then file them in an easy-to-reach place. If the same situation happens again, you can follow the same procedure by referring to your notes.

Adapting to Changes

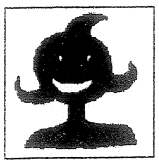
Job descriptions and working conditions almost always change over time.

This may be because there is a change in:

- the structure of the business
- personnel (e.g. supervisor or co-workers).

Change may require an employee to develop new skills to take on different tasks and responsibilities. It may also require that you work with different people or in a different location.

Be prepared to change with the job. If the tasks of the job change, expect that there will be some training on how to perform the new tasks.



ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

A. Initiative

What does showing initiative mean? _____

_____

B. Independence

Read the following scenarios. Describe how each person is showing independence in their job. Then write down how they could improve in this area.

1) Emily has been at her current job for three months. Every time she is given a filing task, she gets her supervisor to check that she has done it properly. Her filing is always correct. She rarely asks him to check any other tasks.

Emily is showing independence by _____

_____

Emily could improve by _____

_____

2) Joey works in a factory. Every now and then the machine he uses for gluing makes a hissing noise. He doesn't know why. He hasn't said anything because he doesn't want to seem dumb. Items are sometimes returned to him because they are not glued properly. Joey does them again.

Joey is showing independence by _____

_____

Joey could improve by _____

_____

3) Abigail works in a supermarket, where she stacks shelves and orders new stock. She checks each shelf to see if there are any gaps between the products. She does not always use the scanner gun to check for stock numbers. Today, her supervisor wants to know why there are no bran cereals on the shelf.

Abigail is showing independence by _____

_____

Abigail could improve by _____

_____

4) George works in the same supermarket as Abigail. He stacks shelves and also works on the checkout. George cleans his work area every day, and checks that all the aisles are clean. He needs to be reminded to tidy the shelves.

George is showing independence by _____

_____

George could improve by _____

_____

C. Change

1) If a change to job tasks or staff happened to you at work, how would this make you feel? Circle any words that apply.

happy stressed anxious excited unhappy nervous

2) If a worker was feeling stressed about change at work, what could they do so that this didn't cause any problems at work?

_____

_____

_____

3) **How should you behave if the following happens at work?**

a) The company you work for sells the business to someone else.

b) The new boss is very different to your old boss, and you feel uncomfortable.

c) The new boss tells everyone that the company is going to move to a new suburb that is a long way from your home.

d) The new supervisor asks you to do a job that you are not trained to do.

e) The supervisor asks you to do a job that is easy and boring.

f) Your supervisor asks you to do a job in a new way that you believe to be unsafe.

Illegal Drugs, Alcohol and Work

Drug users risk both their safety at work and their employment. They also risk being charged by the police and prosecuted (even gaoled) by the courts. Drugs and alcohol may also damage a person's physical and mental health.

Effects of Illegal Drug and Alcohol Use at Work

Accidents

Drug users are much more likely (five times more likely) than others to be involved in a workplace accident. They can easily lose concentration, putting them at risk when using machinery or driving vehicles or equipment.

Poor Judgement

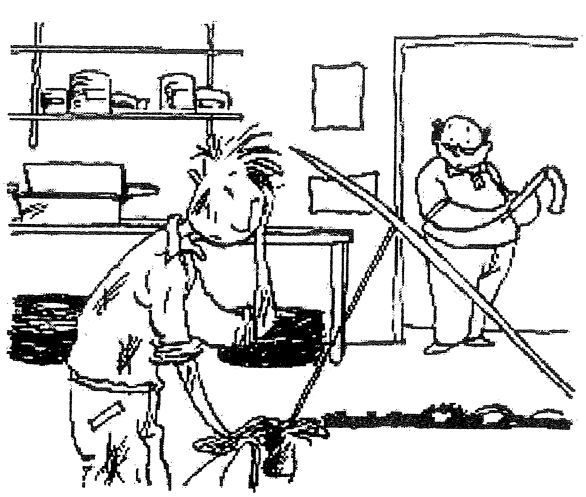
Some drugs may badly affect people's perceptions (sight, hearing etc) and coordination (physical skill). This can lead to poor judgement and serious errors. Certain drugs may even cause hallucinations (seeing things that are not actually there). This may cause the drug user to panic, become violent or act in a way that is dangerous.

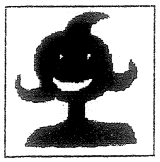
Absences

Drug users may take as many as ten times the average number of sick days. The drugs may make them feel sick or tired, and lead them to take time off work. Drugs can also change a person's mood so that they may become irresponsible in their attitude to work.

Stealing

Illegal drugs, and even alcohol, cost a lot of money. This can lead some users to steal from their employer, family or friends. Theft might be something that the user would normally never consider, but this is the effect that drugs or alcohol can have on personality.





ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

A. Effects of Drugs

List four ways in which illegal drugs and alcohol can affect a worker.

1) _____ 2) _____

3) _____ 4) _____

B. Case Study

Read this case study, then answer the questions.

Victor is under pressure to provide for his family. His wife has stopped working to care for their newborn baby.

Victor has always smoked a little marijuana (an illegal drug), but now he finds himself smoking more often to help escape the stress he is feeling. He has late nights and is often tired for work the next day. Recently he has been taking a lot of sick days.

His wife is becoming concerned, and his boss is also worried about him.

1) How is Victor's drug use affecting his personal and working life?

_____

_____

2) What could he do to prevent the problem from becoming bigger?

_____

_____

3) If he does nothing, what could happen to Victor and his family?

_____

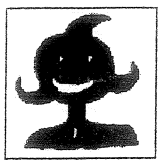
_____

Smoking in the Workplace

Smoking cigarettes is no longer allowed in most workplaces, as other workers are affected by the smoke. Smokers need to find out where they are allowed to smoke, and at what times. It is not acceptable to take time off, even for five minutes, for a 'quick smoke' during time that should be on the job. Each of these 'minutes' over the course of the day can add up to an hour or more of lost time to the employer. Sneaking a cigarette in the lunch room or toilets is also unacceptable.

In some jobs, sneaking a cigarette can have even more serious consequences. Smoking near dangerous or flammable materials like petrol, or near stores of paper or fabric, could put the lives of fellow workers at risk.

If a person can't go several hours without having a cigarette, they may need to consider finding help. For example, local doctors or chemists can provide information on the different ways available to stop or reduce smoking.



ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

Smoking

1) Give two reasons why smoking at work is usually not allowed.

a) _____

b) _____

2) What is a flammable material?

_____

3) Circle whether each statement is true or false. If false, rewrite the statement correctly.

a) Smoking cigarettes is no longer allowed in most workplaces. **True / False**

_____

b) It is okay to take five-minute 'cigarette breaks' whenever you need to. **True / False**

_____

c) You can smoke in a non-smoking workplace if you use the lunch room or toilets. **True / False**

_____

d) If you are addicted to cigarettes, you may need to seek help. **True / False**

_____

4) Where could someone find help to quit smoking?

_____

_____

_____

Getting a 'Reputation'

A person may get a negative *reputation* among their workmates. For example, if someone arrives late for work several times, they will get a reputation for being late — that is, people will make a judgement about their ability to get to work on time.

How can this affect someone's ability to keep a job? Once a person gets a reputation for something, it becomes very difficult to change others' opinions about that part of their behaviour or character.

Having a reputation for something unacceptable may influence an employer when they have to reduce the number of staff they have. A negative reputation may also become known when you apply for a new job, because a prospective employer is likely to check your references and investigate your work history.

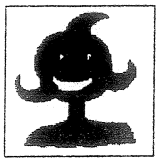
Because reputations are hard to change, you should try to develop a reputation for positive things — such as punctuality and efficiency — rather than negative things.

'Borrowing' from the Workplace

When an employee takes things from the workplace, like stationery or materials, and uses them for their own purposes, they are stealing from the employer.

Stealing from workplaces has become common in Australia. Some employees even believe that it is acceptable, or even their right. It is *not* right!

Stealing will give someone a negative reputation in the workplace. They could be dismissed (sacked) if caught. They could also end up with a criminal record if the employer reports the theft to the police.



ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

A. Reputation

Use the boxed words to complete the sentences below.

reputation	late	difficult	negative	complaining	positive

A person may get a negative _____ for many reasons. One of them could be that a person arrives _____ to work all the time.

Some workers get a reputation for having a _____ attitude. They are always _____, and they don't think that anyone's ideas will work.

A person who has a negative reputation will find it _____ to find jobs, as their reputation will follow them to other employers.

Because reputations are hard to change, it is much wiser to develop a reputation for _____ behaviour.

B. Scenarios

1) Joshua finds it difficult to wake up in the morning and sometimes forgets to put on his alarm. His supervisor noticed that he was occasionally coming in late. What could Joshua do to fix this problem?

_____

_____

_____

2) Anna works in a hairdressing salon. Every day she complains about something: one day it is about standing too long; the next day it is about the smell of the chemicals in the colouring solutions. When the manager told her to stop complaining, Anna became upset. What could Anna do?

_____

_____

_____

C. Borrowing or Stealing?

1) If an employee regularly takes stationery from work without permission, what is this called?

_____

2) What else should an employee not take home without buying or asking permission to borrow?

_____

_____

3) Some employees think they have a right to take things from work. What do you think?

_____

_____

4) What can happen if someone is caught stealing from their workplace?

_____

_____

5) How could employees 'borrowing' small items like stationery, or making frequent personal phone calls, be bad for a business?

_____

_____

_____

6) How would someone feel if they were caught stealing from their workplace?

_____

_____

_____

Sick Leave

Taking Time Off When Sick

As an employee, it is important to use sick leave wisely. An important question to ask is: 'When is a person sick enough to take a day off work?'

The following guidelines may help you to decide what is 'sick enough' to take the day off.

You should generally take the day off work if you:

- feel sick enough to see a doctor that day; or
- have an illness that is contagious (that other people can catch), such as flu, some eye infections, some skin diseases; or
- work in a job where your illness can put others at risk, such as food preparation, child care or aged care; or
- have to operate transport or machinery, and you are not feeling alert enough to do so safely.

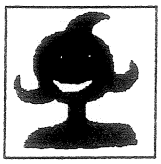
Using Sick Leave

Sick leave should only be used when you are sick.
Employees only have a limited amount of sick leave. If sick leave is used for other reasons, it may not be available when it is really needed.

Know how to report sick leave.
Before needing to take a sick day, find out the procedure for advising your employer that you are sick. Have this information ready (e.g. in your wallet) to use when needed.

Know your sick leave entitlement.
It is the employee's responsibility to know how many sick leave days they are entitled to. The employer doesn't have to warn an employee that all of their sick days have been used up. You may be surprised to see some pay 'missing' if you take more sick days than you are allowed.

Earn the benefits of using sick leave responsibly.
Employers look favourably on employees who don't miss too much work due to illness. Employees can't help being sick on occasions, but by living a healthy lifestyle (like getting enough sleep and not abusing alcohol or drugs) and eating healthy food, they are less likely to need time off for illness.



ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

Sick Leave

1) **Circle any answers that are *incorrect*.**

a) It is probably okay to use sick leave when:

- you are sick and need to visit your doctor
- you want to go to the beach with your friends
- your child has come down with the flu
- you have a cold and you work with elderly people.

b) You are less likely to need time off through sickness if you:

- eat healthy food
- get enough sleep on work nights
- take a day off now and then to rest
- don't abuse drugs or alcohol.

c) You need to take responsibility for your sick leave by:

- planning your sick days in advance
- ensuring you know who to ring and have the phone number handy
- knowing how many sick days you have
- asking how many sick days you have left.

2) List some illnesses that might mean a worker needs to stay at home.

a) _____ b) _____

c) _____ d) _____

3) What might an employer think of an employee who regularly takes a sick day on a Friday or a Monday?

_____

4) What steps should you take to look after yourself so that you are usually well and healthy?

_____

_____

Friends at Work

Friendships

When at work, there is limited time to build friendships. Don't be too pushy. Get to know the people at work gradually.

Working with someone does not mean that they will become a friend. Co-workers probably have friends outside of work and may not be interested in being more than an acquaintance at work.

Remember that work time is for work. You could put your job at risk if you spend a lot of time talking or trying to make friends when you should be working.

Dating in the Workplace

Many people meet and go out with someone they work with. Mixing work and a private life, however, can cause some difficulties in the workplace. It is important to be aware of the following.

1. Know the company policy regarding dating in the workplace. Some companies do not like people to become involved at work.

2. Try not to think of the workplace as a great place to pick up dates. This may affect your work and your relationships with co-workers.

3. If you ask someone out and they turn you down, take no for an answer. Repeatedly asking people out can ruin work relationships, and could be seen as sexual harassment.

4. When dating someone at work, do not display affection in the workplace. Kissing, hugging etc is inappropriate in the workplace (even in a private place like a store room).

5. Spending time with a person at work and during free time can put a strain on a relationship. No matter how much two people like each other, they need time apart. If dating someone from work, it may be better to keep 'together' time for outside work hours.

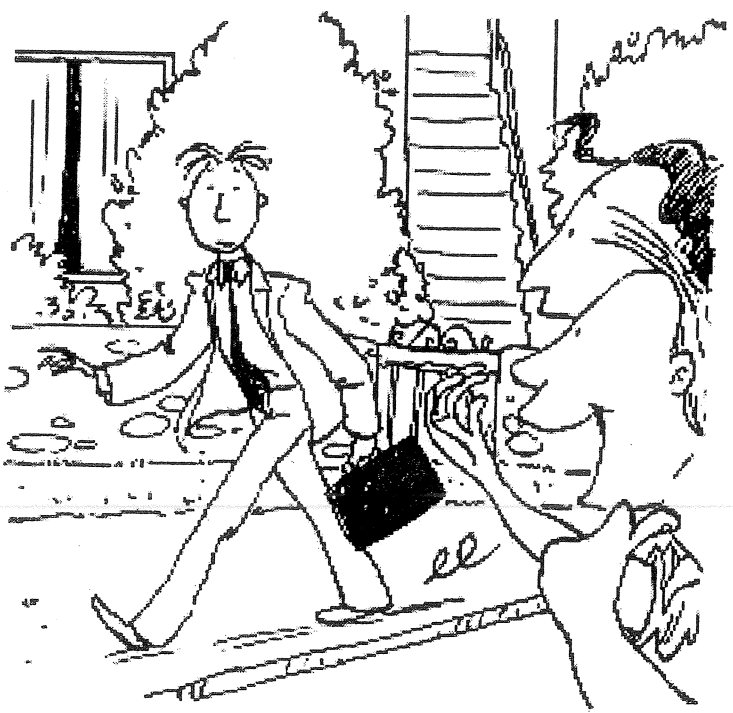
6. A problem could occur if the relationship breaks up. This could make it uncomfortable at work, particularly if the break-up is not a friendly one. Remember to keep 'home' problems at home, and not let them spill over into the workplace.

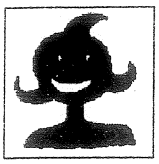
Peer Pressure

Peer pressure occurs when someone is influenced by people of a similar age to behave in a certain way.

For example, if you have friends who are not yet employed or are still at school, they may try to get you to take days off work to go out with them, or you may be tempted to take time off to be with them.

This is not a reasonable excuse for taking time off work, and such behaviour could lead to an employer sacking you for being unreliable. If you want to go out with friends, make it at times when you are not rostered to work.





ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

A. Friendships

Answer the following questions.

1) What are some simple ways to develop friendships in the workplace?

2) When would be the best times to work on these friendships?

3) What are some behaviours that would cause people not to like another person? Give reasons.

B. Problem-solving

Help Jessie and Khalid solve their problems.

1) Jessie eats by herself in the lunch room every day. She is too shy to sit with others or to arrange to have lunch with other workers of her age. What could Jessie do?

2) Khalid spends every minute of his break hanging around Peter, his supervisor. He gets upset if Peter goes to lunch at a different time. What could Khalid do?

C. Relationships at Work

Read about Bill and Sarah, then answer the questions.

> Sarah and Bill have been going out for two months. They both work in the same department store. While they never act inappropriately in front of customers, they do kiss and hug in the lunch room. They think this is all right, as only other staff members can see them there. They spend a lot of time talking during the day, either planning their weekends or just chatting.

1) How could Sarah and Bill's relationship affect their work?

2) What would their workmates think about them kissing and hugging in the lunch room? Do you think this is appropriate behaviour? Why / Why not?

3) How should Sarah and Bill conduct themselves in the workplace?

4) What difficulties could they experience if they continue behaving as they are? Or if their relationship ends?

D. Peer Pressure

1) What is peer pressure?

_____

_____

2) List two peer-pressure situations that may cause problems at work.

a) _____

b) _____

3) **Help Jerry and Kerry solve their peer-pressure problems.**

a) Jerry wishes to go rollerblading with his friends on Wednesday afternoon. He is rostered to work all day Wednesday. What should Jerry do?

_____

_____

How could Jerry make sure that he got to go rollerblading with his friends another time?

_____

_____

b) Kerry would like to go to her friend's office Christmas party, but she has to work. Kerry's friend tells her to take the day off. What should Kerry do?

_____

_____

Reading Work Rosters

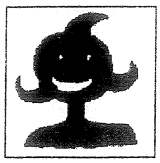
A work roster is a timetable that employees follow. It tells them the days when they need to work and the hours they need to do.

More and more jobs these days are part-time or casual. Shifts may be required on any day of the week, and may cover any period of the day or night.

One way an employer can let staff know when they are to come to work is by putting all of the employees' names on a roster which shows the days and hours that each person will work. It looks something like a graph or a table.

It is each employee's responsibility to read the roster and know when they should be working. It is not a valid excuse to say to an employer: 'You didn't tell me when you wanted me to work' if there is a roster on display.

Work rosters can look very complicated if there are a lot of employees. If you are unsure how to read the work roster, ask a co-worker or supervisor to explain.



ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

Reading a Roster

Mega 3 Cinemas floorstaff roster **Week 4/3 – 11/3**

Name	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
Adam A	9am – 1pm	9am – 5pm		6pm–lock-up	12–5pm	9am – 1pm	6pm-lock-up
Sarah		9am – 1pm	12–5pm		4–10pm	9am – 1pm	9am – 1pm
Nabil	11am–3pm	9am – 1pm	1–6pm		5–10pm	6pm-lock-up	9am – 1pm
Adam K	12–4pm	1–5pm	6pm-lock-up		4–10pm	9am – 1pm	12–5pm
Greg		9am – 5pm	5–10pm	12–5pm	6pm-lock-up	12–5pm	
Teri	3–7pm	1–9pm			3–9pm	12–5pm	1–5pm
Karen	4–8pm	4–10pm		12–6pm	4–10pm	12–5pm	4–10pm
Sandy	6–10pm	4–10pm			4–10pm	4–10pm	
Oliver	7pm-lock-up	6pm-lock-up		5–10pm	5–10pm	4–10pm	

Use the staff roster above to answer these questions.

1) Write down the days and times when Adam Kyriarkos is working.

_____

_____

2) Which days are the quietest? _____

3) Which days are the busiest? _____

How do you know this? _____

_____

4) What are the four main shift times?

_____

_____

5) Which employees have to work a full day (an eight-hour shift)?

_____

On what day do they have to do their full-day shift? _____

6) Sandy cannot work on Tuesday night. Who could she 'swap' a shift with, and for when?

_____

7) Write down what Sandy could say when asking a co-worker to 'swap' a shift.

_____

_____

_____

8) Sandy is unable to make arrangements to 'swap' he shift. What can she do?

_____

_____

_____

Leaving a Job

There are many reasons why people choose to leave a job:

- Some people take casual jobs — for example, while they are still at school or TAFE — to give them some spending money or to support themselves while studying. These jobs are usually taken for a set period of time and are never intended to be long-term career options.
- Others may choose to leave a job because they have developed more skills or have completed some training.
- Some people need to leave a job due to factors outside the workplace, e.g. a family move, an injury or illness, loss of available transport.
- Sometimes people choose to leave a job because it is not what they thought it would be. In other words, they don't like it and choose to leave.

Whatever the circumstances are, there is a right and wrong way to leave a job.

Most jobs require an employee to give 'notice'. This means that the employee needs to let the employer know that they are going to leave. Some employers will ask for this in writing, others will accept verbal notice (being told by the employee). The amount of 'notice' expected differs for each company, but it is usually the amount of time from one pay to the next. For example, if you are paid weekly, you must give a week's notice.

Keep in mind, however, that if you change jobs often, a prospective employer may think that you will not be with the company long, and may choose someone with a more stable employment history.

What You Should Do

When leaving, let the employer know:

- that you intend to leave
- the date that you intend to leave
- your reason for leaving. This is optional (your choice), but it helps the employer, and will allow you to leave on good terms
- that you are thankful for the opportunity they have given you, and the skills you have learned.

It is best to leave a job on good terms with the employer. You may want to return some day. Also, it is very likely that your next employer will want to talk to your last employer about how reliable you are and how well you work.

It is not easy to get a job, so if you have one, it is best to keep it until you are sure that there is another job to go to.

Reasons for Leaving

Sometimes an employee is forced to leave a job. There is a number of possible reasons for this:

- The company may close down or relocate (move somewhere else). If they relocate, an employee may be offered the opportunity to move with the company. This may mean moving away from home. In this situation, the employee would need to decide whether to move or to look for another job.

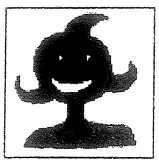
- The company be taken over by another company. This may make some or all of the employees redundant (no longer needed). Depending on how long each employee has worked for the company, they may be eligible for a redundancy payout (extra money to make up for losing their job).

- An employee may be asked, or told, to leave because their work is unsatisfactory.

Dismissal

Although being asked to leave a job can be a difficult thing to deal with, you can use the experience to your benefit. It will not help to make excuses, or to blame others for mistakes made.

It is important to be honest at job interviews if asked why you left your last job. Most employers will check. If dismissed for something that was your fault, you could explain that you have learned from that experience and have worked on the problem that caused the dismissal.



ACTIVITY

Workplace Behaviour

A. How to Leave Work

1) List some reasons why an employee may choose to leave a job.

2) How much notice should you give once you have decided to leave?

3) List some reasons why an employee may be asked to leave a job.

4) What is a letter of resignation?

5) When is it appropriate to write a letter of resignation?

6) Why is it best to leave a job on good terms?

7) List some ways that would assist you to leave a job on good terms.

B. Letter of Resignation

Choose one of the following scenarios, then write a letter of resignation.

1) You are resigning from the Starstruck Cafe, as you are moving interstate. You are giving two weeks' notice. Your employer's name is Michael Wong.

2) You are not happy at work, and want to find another job. After searching for three months, you find a new job as a sales assistant. However, you have to tell your old boss that you want to leave immediately.

3) You have worked for a company for ten years. The company is going to move to another town, but you cannot travel that far, as you have to pick up your children from school. You decide to resign from the job.

5.3 Pressures at Work

Stress

Stress is caused by a lot of pressure or tension. Most work involves some stress.

Not all stress is bad. Feeling some pressure to perform can help workers to stay motivated to achieve goals.

Stress becomes a problem when the pressure becomes too much and causes anxiety. It can affect home life as well as work life.

Stress does not only affect the top executives of companies. It can affect any worker.

Types of Stress

A worker may feel stressed:

- in their first job because the expectations, people and environment seem threatening
- if there is a change in supervisor or work tasks
- if someone criticises their work
- if there are changes in their private life that spill over into the workplace.

Staying employed means being able to deal with these situations. This is called stress management.

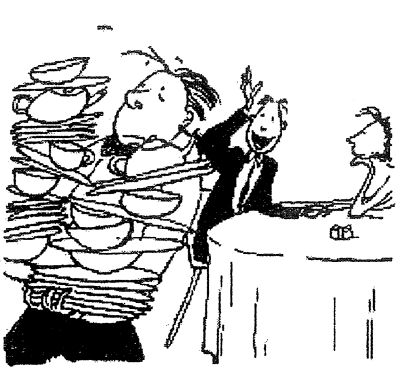
Stress Management

Stress management is about recognising when stress levels are getting out of control, then doing something positive in response.

Checklist

Stress can be signalled by:

- feelings of anxiety or panic
- headaches or tense muscles
- poor concentration
- sudden changes in mood
- inability to sleep or relax



- feelings that things are out of control
- overeating or not eating at all
- smoking and/or drinking too much
- difficulties with relationships at work and home.

Some people experience more than one of these signs at one time.

Stress Management Strategies

Time Management
Plan the day so that there is enough time to do everything.

Taking Breaks
Working without breaks will produce poor work. It leads to mistakes, which then lead to stress. Make use of breaks so that you remain fresh, relaxed and alert.

Resolving Conflict
Having a difficult time with a co-worker can be very stressful. The two people concerned need to work out a solution to the problem.

Sensible Diet and Regular Exercise
Taking time to eat well reduces stress. Exercising regularly relaxes both mind and body. Exercise also reduces feelings of depression, anger and tension.

Relaxation
Activities like yoga or meditation are good ways to reduce stress. Doing nothing, or sitting down and reading a book, is also very relaxing.

Sleep
Sleep is important for relaxation and well-being. Tiredness leads to mistakes at work, which may increase stress levels.

Talking
Sometimes help may be needed when stress levels get too high. Talking with a friend or supervisor, or with a professional such as a counsellor, may help. Local doctors can provide this type of information.

ACTIVITY

Pressures at Work

A. Stress Management

1) **Unjumble the words in the following sentences so that they make sense. Use the boxed words to help you.**

feel	tense	panic	muscles	sleep	
ways	diet	breaks	time	need	consult

Stress is the pressure we (elfe) _____ when placed in (tnsee) _____ situations. Some signs of stress are feelings of anxiety or (anpci) _____, headaches or tense (muclsse) _____, poor concentration and inability to (epesl) _____.

Some (ysaw) _____ you can manage stress include: having a sensible (tdei) _____ and doing regular exercise; taking (bskrae) _____; and using your (imte) _____ effectively.

If you cannot control stress, you may (eend) _____ to seek professional help and (noctlus) _____ your local doctor.

2) What types of situations cause you to feel stressed?

_____

_____

_____

3) What strategies can you use to stay calm, happy and in control?

_____

_____

_____

B. Looking More Closely

Sasha, Marissa and Jim are feeling stressed at work. Help them work out what strategies they could use to manage their stress levels.

1) Sasha arrived at work on Monday morning to find that she had a new supervisor. Sasha liked working with Jim, her previous supervisor. She has now become so stressed that she is making mistakes in her work and is rude to her new supervisor, Annie.

   What could Sasha do to return to her usual happy, competent self?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2) Marissa had a big fight with her parents last night. She is feeling very tense and stressed. She is having trouble concentrating at work.

   What could Marissa do to reduce her stress level?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3) Jim has been away from work for two days because of the flu. He has returned to find that no one has done any of his work. There are boxes full of parts waiting for him to put together. Jim looks at the next workstation and sees that his work will soon be needed over there. Jim works as fast as he can. By morning tea, he is feeling very anxious and stressed.

   What could Jim do to reduce his stress?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Dealing with Frustration and Anger

Everyone experiences frustration and anger in the workplace from time to time.

Sometimes people can get angry or frustrated with things, rather than with other people. This may happen when a piece of machinery does not work properly. It may also occur when a series of little things don't go right. At other times, a person may become angry or frustrated because someone else is doing something that they find annoying.

The way to deal with these things is to take some 'time out' to cool off. Remember that yelling at, or hitting, a piece of machinery is not going to fix the fault. Nor will yelling at a co-worker or supervisor solve a difficult situation.

Strategies

1. Try to control yourself. Use some deep-breathing or relaxation techniques.

2. Move away from the situation until you calm down. Work out the reason for the conflict. What was it that upset you? Was it something you just didn't want to do, or hear? Or is it a problem that you need to be assertive about?

3. Plan a strategy to resolve the situation. Yelling or losing your temper is not a solution.

Resolving People Problems

Ask the person if they have time to talk.

Tell them calmly how you are feeling, and why you are feeling that way. Use statements like: 'I'm feeling upset right now, because you changed things without telling me.' Don't use statements that blame the other person for how you are feeling, like: 'You make me upset.'

Listen to what the person has to say. Let them tell their side of the story. Then try to calmly work out a solution to the problem. Some compromise may be needed on one or both sides.

It you cannot quickly work out a solution or you are getting angry, tell the other person how you are feeling and that you would like to talk later. *Don't* wait until you are *already* angry before walking away. Walk away before you reach that point.

Sometimes you will not be able to reach a solution. When this happens, you will need to bring in a third person, like your supervisor, to help sort out the problem.